

RAYMOND MAURICE GILMORE
1 January 1907 – 31 December 1983



Photograph: Mike Hatchimonji, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

Ray Gilmore leading a whale-watching expedition.

On 31 December 1983, the San Diego community lost one of its most notable and well-loved scientists, Dr. Raymond M. Gilmore. His sudden death on the eve of his 77th birthday occurred as he was about to lead a whale-watching boat excursion. Throughout his life, Ray was a person who epitomized enthusiasm, energy, and thoughtfulness. He was both an engaging storyteller and a precise lecturer. An ethnobiologist before the word came into vogue, he ignored academic boundaries. Scarcely any subject in natural history and anthropology seemed to escape his scrutiny. His 65 published popular and scientific papers cover the subjects of descriptive taxonomy, zooarchaeology, epidemiology, and marine mammal studies.

Ray Gilmore took his A.B. and M.A. in zoology and anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. During summers he collected birds and mammals extensively in California, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, and Alaska. He spent one summer excavating Santa Cruz Islands shellmounds off Santa Barbara.

After a year as Ranger Naturalist at Yosemite, Ray went to Harvard in 1934 for doctoral studies as a Gibbs Fellow. At the end of the following summer he was invited by the Rockefeller Foundation to join a team of 65 scientists for a two and a half year stint in Brazil studying yellow fever epidemiology. Except for a brief period back in the States to marry Elizabeth Cotter of the American Museum and to complete his Ph.D. at Cornell University (Ithaca was his birthplace), Ray was to spend most of his time until late 1944 with the Institute of Inter-American Affairs studying yellow fever, malaria, typhus, and sylvatic plague in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. In the tropics he built treetop platforms to live-trap canopy animals for blood samples and he collected skins and skeletons for United States museums. Always inquisitive and thorough, he kept voluminous notes on the animals he handled, even drawing wing shapes and making color sketches of their soft parts. In the rubber collecting area of northeast Bolivia he built two hospitals and commissioned medical boats to attend to the needs of the scattered rubber gatherers.



Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Raymond Gilmore

Ray Gilmore during his epidemiological studies in Matto Grosso, Brazil, in the 1930s.

Both his master's and doctoral theses dealt with Bering Sea area mammalian biogeography in relation to glaciation. During the summer of 1931 he lived and trapped with St. Lawrence Island Eskimos. A spin-off of this research was Ray's continuing interest in the peopling of the New World and the dating of Early Man sites.

In late 1944 Ray went to the Smithsonian Institution as Associate Curator of Mammals. One of his jobs was to sort through 20,000 archaeological mammal bones. He published four important papers on zooarchaeology. Two were concerned with specific sites in Pennsylvania and the state of Coahuila, Mexico. Two others, one in *American Antiquity*, and the other in the *Journal of Mammalogy*, discussed the state of the art of faunal identification. In the latter, Ray wrote, "This type of work is considered by most identifiers to be an unmitigated drudge. There is also a desire on the part of the archaeologist to receive his identifications as soon as possible for his reports, with the result that the identifier's own work is interrupted." Some of his advice is just as appropriate today as when written in 1949. For instance, he recommended, "In preparing the report on the collection, mention can be made not only of the species present in the collection and the possible significance of their presence and abundance, but also of the species not

found in the collection and the possible significance of their absence." He encouraged the permanent preservation and conspicuous marking of critical bones such as elements of species no longer found in the region. "This is an important point, because doubts as to one's own identifications of questionable and critical species always arise, and the pertinent bones will be desired in all good conscience for reexamination. They should be readily available."

With his many years of experience with South American biota and his background in zooarchaeology, Ray was a natural candidate to write "The Fauna and Ethnozoology of South America" for vol. 6 of Julian H. Steward's *Handbook of South American Indians* (1950, Smithsonian Institution).

From 1946 to 1958 Ray worked for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, first in Washington, later at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla, California. Ray's interest in whales, dolphins, and porpoises flowered during this period, an interest that occupied most of his own teaching and research for the next three and a half decades. In 1958 he became Research Associate in Marine Mammalogy at the San Diego Natural History Museum. The following year he led the first whale-watching boats to view gray whales off the San Diego coast. He took smaller tours to observe the Baja California calving lagoons of the grays in Scammons and San Ignacio Lagoons. Under National Science Foundation sponsorship in 1969 and again in 1970 he led teams of scientists into the Southern Hemisphere to survey marine mammals and birds. Each winter he entertained, in the best sense of the word, over 5,000 people on San Diego whale-watching tours.

A member of the Phi Sigma, Phi Beta Kappa, and Sigma Xi, Ray was also an honorary foreign member of the prestigious Venezuelan Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales La Salle. He was an active member of the Committee on Polar Research, the National Research Council, and the National Academy of Science. When in 1982 the San Diego Museum of Man and the San Diego Natural History Museum co-sponsored the Fifth Annual Ethnobiology Conference, the local committee dedicated the conference in Ray Gilmore's honor.

Ray was no ordinary person, as anyone fortunate enough to know him will attest. During his academic years he was closely associated with some of the great names of this century such as Ales Hrdlicka, Joseph Grinnell, Alex Wetmore, Remmington Kellogg, Roy Chapman Andrews, Robert Cushman Murphy, Harry Swarth, the Kroebers, Carl O. Sauer, Carl Hubbs, and many others in the fields of anthropology, biology, and paleontology. An excellent storyteller, Ray had memorable anecdotes about them all. He assembled great files, *Neotoma* fashion, on these related subjects and seemed always able to help a student by providing references. His humor and vivacity are missed by all who knew him.

—Amadeo M. Rea
San Diego Natural History Museum

(For more detailed information, see *Environmental Southwest*, Spring 1984.)